

## Introduction to Obadiah

### Author and Date

The book of [Obadiah](#) is an oracle of judgment pronounced in the mid-sixth century BC, predicting God's destruction of Edom, Judah's neighbor comprised of the descendants of Jacob's brother Esau ([Genesis 36](#)). Little is known about Obadiah himself, although he is probably not any of those who share that name, mentioned elsewhere in the Old Testament.

### Audience

Obadiah is directed explicitly at Edom (v. [1](#)), with whom Israel (later Judah) had many conflicts. His message—that Edom would taste God's wrath for its hostility toward Judah—is not his alone (cf. [Num. 24:18](#); [Ps. 137:7](#); [Jer. 25:21](#); [49:7-22](#); [Lam. 4:21-22](#); [Ezek. 25:12-14](#); ch. [35](#); [Amos 1:11-12](#); [Mal. 1:2-5](#)).

The fulfillment of Obadiah's prophecy began with Babylonian attacks against Edom in 553 BC and continued with the north Arabian Nabatean destruction of Edom in the early fifth century. The ultimate fulfillment of Obadiah's prophecy will come when remnants of Edom are gathered with those of all the nations worshiping Israel's God in and through Jesus Christ.

Implicitly, as part of the Hebrew Scriptures, the audience of the prophecy is also Israel. God's public declaration that he would punish the oppressors of his people would be an oracle of hope to his people (see notes on Nahum). Obadiah's prophecy teaches us that an aspect of God's mercy is his ultimate restraining and conquering of the enemies of the people he loves. Grace is God's provision of what we need but cannot provide for ourselves, and this provision includes overcoming the efforts and punishing the evil of opponents of his covenant purposes. This provision may not come in the time of our choosing, but the prophets assure us of the certainty of God's ultimate victory. The dimensions of this victory in Obadiah's prophecy include: defeat of the enemy, preservation of God's people, removal of evil threats to God's people, and even the salvation of a remnant of the enemy—all dimensions of a grace beyond human expectation or ability.

## The Gospel in Obadiah

As an oracle of judgment, [Obadiah](#) presents unique challenges for gospel application. For more on the general subject of meeting these challenges, see the introductory notes to Nahum which, along with Obadiah, consists entirely of such an oracle—though Obadiah makes more explicit mention of salvation and hope (vv. [17-21](#)). Furthermore, there are indications that a remnant of Edom will be saved and ruled over by God as part of his people.

This hope is reflected in various ways. First, Obadiah may be an extended elaboration on [Amos 9:11-12](#), the passage immediately preceding Obadiah in the Bible. The restoration of David's kingship through Israel's Messiah would not only restore the fortunes of Judah but would include a remnant of Edom ([Deut. 28:9-10](#); [Amos 9:11-12](#)). The similarity between the two passages would implicitly remind the reader that a remnant of Edom will be among those from all nations who will worship the Lord in his consummated kingdom.

Second, Obadiah underscores God's grace from a redemptive-historical perspective. For the Judah-Edom relationship must be read against its origins in the Jacob-Esau relationship. The two strove against each other even before birth, but God sovereignly chose the younger to be served by the older ([Gen. 25:22ff.](#)). This sovereign act of God came to epitomize his electing grace in both the Old Testament ([Mal. 1:2-3](#)) and the New Testament ([Rom. 9:13](#)).

Jacob was designated heir of the covenant God made with Abraham—that God would bless him and, *through* him, bless the nations ([Gen. 12:2-3](#); [Ex. 2:24](#); [Lev. 26:42](#)). Nevertheless Jacob strove to obtain those promises unethically and self-reliantly—and his receiving them despite his conniving is a vivid demonstration of God's grace. For his part Esau, rather than living by faith in the promises God made to and *through* Jacob, lived by his appetites and chose rivalry with his brother instead. This pattern of antipathy repeatedly characterized the historic relations between the descendants of the two brothers (e.g., [Num. 20:14-21](#); [2 Kings 16:6](#); [Ezek. 25:12-13](#)) and established the trajectory of the Judah-Edom relationship seen in Obadiah. But even though the "house" (nation and kingship) of Esau will be no more ([Obad. 18](#)), God will also graciously save a remnant of Edom for his kingdom (see above). For both the house of Jacob and the house of Esau, the blessings experienced are due only to the grace of God.

There are two general ways in which the New Testament takes up the Jacob-Edom dynamic. First, the descendants of Abraham, and therefore the rightful heirs to the promises to Abraham, are those who do the works of Abraham by believing in Jesus Christ ([John 8:39-47](#)). As such, followers of Jesus inherit the promises continued through Jacob/Israel ([Gal. 3:7](#); [Rom. 2:28; 9:6-18](#); cf. [Heb. 12:15-17](#)). Second, and foundational to the first, is that Jesus Christ himself is the promised Seed of Abraham ([Gal. 3:16](#)). Through him every divine promise has been, is being, and will be fulfilled ([2 Cor. 1:20](#)). The blessings of the Abrahamic covenant come to believers in



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### Weekly Overview

Christ ([Gal. 3:14](#)). Even though he was harassed by his brothers ([Mark 3:21](#)), he has led free a host of captives ([Eph. 4:8](#)) and restored the fortunes of Judah.

#### Obadiah Outline

- The Announcement of Edom's Destruction (vv. [1-4](#))
- The Extent of Edom's Destruction (vv. [5-9](#))
- The Occasion of Edom's Destruction (vv. [10-14](#))
- The Day of the Lord Is Near (vv. [15-18](#))
- The Extent of the Lord's Reign (vv. [19-21](#))

## Introduction to Ezekiel

### Author and Date

The book of [Ezekiel](#) records the preaching and message of the sixth-century Hebrew prophet of the same name. Ezekiel's name literally means "God strengthens," appropriate for a man whose call was to prophesy to a people who had been carried into exile by a foreign power.

Ezekiel prophesied in the years following the exile of the Israelite people to Babylon that began in 597 BC. In fact, Ezekiel himself was one of those carried from Jerusalem to Babylon and settled along the Chebar canal. Many of Ezekiel's prophecies are explicitly dated, with the earliest coming in the summer of 593 BC, about four or five years after the exile, and the latest about 22 years after that.

### Audience

Ezekiel prophesied to a people in exile, who were tempted to doubt both the power and the justice of their God. His messages, therefore, stress God's universal reign and the absolute rightness of his judgment of his own people. Ezekiel's message is not all about judgment, though. Grace shines through, as he also gives the exiled Israelites a series of beautiful messages about God's ability and determination to restore them, to bring them out of exile, and to give them life where there has been only death. Most of all, however, he reveals to God's people that even though they are currently in exile, God has determined that one day he will dwell among them forever. Thus the book ends with a description of God's city, and the name of it is "The LORD Is There."

### The Gospel in Ezekiel

Many Christians approach the book of [Ezekiel](#) and see little more than an obscure mass of judgment oracles, within which are a few random passages that speak of God's grace. Compared to the other Major Prophets—Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Daniel—Ezekiel has probably the fewest obvious messianic passages anticipating Christ, so it is not the first book that comes to mind when one wants to see the gospel expounded in the Old Testament.

Understood rightly, however, Ezekiel contains and continues a beautiful story of God's grace to his undeserving people. It is a compelling Old Testament witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ. The whole structure of the book, in fact, points to God's grace to his people in spite of their sin. In the first 24 chapters, the book contains a succession of oracles that promise judgment against the people of Israel. Jerusalem will be placed under siege and destroyed, Ezekiel warns, and this will happen because of the people's sin. The exile has not happened by accident, and neither will

the destruction of Jerusalem. All of it comes from the hand of God in response to the people's rebellion against him.

In chapters 24–33, the focus changes as God turns his attention to judging the nations around Israel. He is sovereign not only over his people but over all the nations of the world. None of them will be excused for their rebellion.

In chapter [33](#), the focus of the book changes again. With God's judgment against Jerusalem carried out in full, and with judgment pronounced against Israel's enemies, God now begins to promise his people that they will be restored. Life will reign where there has been only death. God will pour out his Spirit on the people. The destroyed temple, the central symbol of God's presence among his people, will be restored. God will once again dwell with his people.

Not only does Ezekiel promise God's presence, he also indicates over and over again that God will accomplish this restoration of his people through the work of a king of Israel who will sit yet again on David's throne. This was an extraordinary prophecy, because Jehoiachin—the last of the Davidic line of kings—had himself been carried away into exile. The throne, therefore, was empty. God promises through Ezekiel, however, that it will not remain so forever. One day, God will restore his people and a new ruler will sit on David's throne. This king will not only reign for eternity but will also make atonement for his people's sins and bring them back into God's presence.

In all this, Ezekiel points powerfully both to the coming of Jesus Christ and to the grace of God in forgiving sinners. All human beings—not just Israel—are sinners who deserve God's judgment. Therefore the first 32 chapters of the book are not without relevance to us. We learn from them about God's holiness, the wickedness and consequences of rebellion against him, and the divine wrath such sin deserves. At the same time, though, we learn also of God's love for his people despite their rebellion, and of his promise to send a Savior who would restore them, give them life, and bring them to live in his presence forever.

### Ezekiel Outline

- Inaugural Vision ([1:1–3:27](#))
- Judgment on Jerusalem and Judah ([4:1–24:27](#))
- Oracles against Foreign Nations ([25:1–32:32](#))
- After the Fall of Jerusalem, Visions of Restoration ([33:1–48:35](#))